



Department of Justice

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MICHIGAN COUPLE PLEADS GUILTY TO OBSCENITY VIOLATIONS

WASHINGTON – A Brutus, Mich. couple pleaded guilty to charges stemming from a business they operated for the purpose of selling obscene videos, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Margaret Chiara of the Western District of Michigan announced today.

John Mart Messer entered guilty pleas in U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids, Mich. on Monday to one count of engaging in the business of selling or distributing obscene matter and one count of receiving child pornography. His wife, Deborah Messer, pleaded guilty to one count of aiding and abetting the operation of a business of selling or distributing obscene matter. Mr. Messer faces a mandatory minimum penalty of five years in prison on the child pornography charge. The maximum penalty for Mrs. Messer's offense is five years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 27, 2006.

Mr. Messer began selling sexually explicit videotapes in 1996 through JMM Products, Inc., a company he founded for that purpose, and continued to do so until his arrest earlier this year. The videotapes included graphic depictions of hardcore sex acts between humans and between humans and animals. The videotapes were advertised through a mail order catalog prepared with the assistance of Mrs. Messer, who also aided and abetted her husband by depositing some of the company's products in the mail and by typing customer lists and helping to keep the company's books.

U.S. Attorney Margaret Chiara said the convictions in this case would be helpful in demonstrating the commitment of the Department of Justice to the enforcement of federal obscenity and child pornography laws. "The distribution of obscene materials such as these threatens the well-being of American families and must not be tolerated," she said.

The case was prosecuted by Trial Attorney Sheila Phillips of the Obscenity Prosecution Task Force and Assistant U.S. Attorney Brian Delaney, Chief of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Michigan. The case was investigated by the FBI. The Obscenity Prosecution Task Force, part of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, investigates and prosecutes the producers and distributors of hardcore pornography that meets the test for obscenity as defined by the U.S. Supreme Court.

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